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Pro-Sandinista journalists link U.S. press to CIA

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MANAGUA, Nicaragua — A international assembly of "progressive" journalists concluded here by accusing the United States of planning to invade Nicaragua, and claiming that the mainstream U.S. press along with the Nicaraguan opposition newspaper La Prensa are accomplices of the CIA.



The joint three-day meeting here last week of the Prague-based International Organization of Journalists and the Latin American Journalists' Federation was convened to express the solidarity of "progressive" journalists with Nicaragua's Sandinista government.

More than 100 journalists from some 40 countries took part in the sessions, which were directed by the Sandinista-created Nicaraguan Journalists Union.

"The policy of the government of the United States toward Nicaragua is profoundly immoral," the journalists charged in their closing statement. "The attempt to subdue this people by hunger, and to impose an economic blockade constitutes a shameful spectacle. Such actions can only be understood in one way: as a prelude to armed invasion."

The statement, read at Friday's International Labor Day demonstration, referred to the U.S. cutoff of preferential wheat sales to Nicaragua and the suspension of \$15 million in aid because of alleged Sandinista complicity in supplying arms to leftist rebels in El Salvador.

It claimed that hundreds of former Nicaraguan national guardsmen are training in the United States to invade Nicaragua and that Washington is pouring armaments and other war materiel into neighboring Honduras, whose government is allegedly moving them up to the Nicaraguan border.

Citing an "enclosure of lies" about Central America and the Caribbean, the journalists accused the "great American press" of "carrying out an intense campaign of misinformation about the reality of Nicaragua and El Salvador."

"Upon those media and their paid servants falls the blood of thousands of assassinated patriots," the statement continued. "They are largely to blame for the crimes that are committed today and those that may be committed in the future."

The three-day gathering served as a forum for daily criticism of La Prensa and as a backdrop for name-calling between a Sandinista commander and the feisty Managua newspaper.

It was the assassination of La Prensa publisher Pedro Joaquin Chamorro in January 1978 that served as the final catalyst for the ouster of the late President Anastasio Somoza. Chamorro's family is now divided about the Sandinista revolution, with his older son and one brother running La Prensa, his younger son running the official Sandinista daily Barricada and his

other brother in charge of the pro-government, but cooperatively-owned El Nuevo Diario.

Carlos Nuñez, one of the nine commanders who rule Nicaragua in the name of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), opened the assembly by calling La Prensa "the newspaper of infamy" and the organ of reactionaries.

Displaying copies of La Prensa to the visiting journalists, Nuñez said it had attempted to divert Nicaraguan attention from real issues, such as the U.S. wheat sale cutoff, by playing up stories about Ronald Reagan's recuperation and numerous reports by Nicaraguan Roman Catholics of the appearance of the Virgin Mary in a rural community.

Pedro J. Chamorro Jr., the 29-year-old co-editor of La Prensa, responded with a signed editorial saying that the newspaper is not opposed to a social revolution in Nicaragua but that the Sandinistas are demanding "innocuous journalism" that "blindly obeys party lines."

Chamorro said the Nicaraguan people have come to consider remarks such as those by Nuñez a "scratched record."

Another group of foreign journalists, in Nicaragua on a reporting trip organized by the government, spent 2½ hours at the La Prensa offices questioning Chamorro in a tone that he later described as more "inquisitorial than investigative."

Chamorro has said on other occasions that the truth about which Nicaraguan newspaper is with the people can be found in the press run, the number of newspapers printed each day. La Prensa claims — and no one denies it — that it has more than twice the combined circulation of the two pro-govern-

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